

BIN LADEN

Obama Kept A Poker Face After Giving Strike Order

BY DARLENE SUPERVILLE
Associated Press



Obama

WASHINGTON — In a remarkable 36 hours of his presidency, Barack Obama carried a momentous secret and gave no hint of it as he consoled tornado victims, delivered a college commencement address and cracked jokes at a black-tie dinner.

What few insiders knew was that Obama gave the go-ahead Friday for the military operation that would end with the death of terrorist leader Osama bin Laden, target of the world's most intense manhunt.

After giving his consent, Obama, wife Michelle and daughters

Sasha and Malia left the White House on a busy day of travel, with three stops in two states.

In Alabama, one of several Southern states battered by fierce

tornados, Obama assumed his role as consoler in chief as he and the first lady got an up-close look at communities in Tuscaloosa that had been flattened by the twisters.

Next stop: Cape Canaveral, Fla., even though Endeavour's launch, the next to last one before

the shuttle fleet is retired, had been scrubbed for technical reasons well before Obama left Alabama. He stuck to his schedule, touring NASA facilities with his family. He also met privately with wounded Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, D-Ariz. Her husband, Mark Kelly, is the shuttle commander.

The president also delivered an evening commencement address at Miami Dade College before returning to Washington.

Obama wore a poker face throughout the weekend. On Saturday, Obama attended the White House Correspondents' Association annual dinner and lobbed a few barbs at Donald Trump after having endured

weeks of attacks by the prospective Republican presidential candidate over whether Obama is U.S.-born.

On Sunday, Obama headed for the Andrews Air Force Base golf course, as he does on many weekends when the weather is nice. But he only played nine holes, instead of his customary 18, and left after about four

hours. The reporters who accompany him on public outings thought the chilly, rainy weather played into his decision to leave hours earlier than usual.

Actually, Obama was headed for a meeting to review final preparations for the operation against bin Laden.

In retrospect, there were some meager clues that something may have been going on. Obama went

straight to the Oval Office in his golf shoes, instead of to the residence as he normally does after golf. Photos showed him looking tense and clenched-jawed.

All became clear late Sunday when Obama told the nation shortly before midnight that bin Laden had been killed at the hands of U.S. forces.

Seniors

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"The death of Osama bin Laden is the start of the end of something. What, we don't know yet," Niebrugge added. "We grew up in a time where we didn't know what war was about and we didn't know that America wasn't invincible. You grow up with that feeling because nothing had ever happened, so we didn't even worry about. So when something like 9/11 happened, it was a culture shock. It put back into our reality that we could be attacked."

Yankton High School principal Dr. Wayne Kindle explained that he felt one reason that the death of bin Laden resonated with the students so deeply was the close ties the community had with the war on terrorism.

"I think this is personal for a lot of families in Yankton, particularly with the involvement of Charlie Battery in our community through the years," he said. "I think it is really put into perspective when we talk about 9/11, why we went to war and where we are at now. It all ties in together with what happened (Sunday)."

The four seniors explained that the announcement that bin Laden had been killed was the main topic of conversation beginning Sunday night with a wave of text messages, phone calls and Facebook posts.

"It was all over Facebook, all over TV," Rembold said. "People were texting about it last night. I got a text last night and I was like, 'What?' I had to flip over and go watch it. It makes you question what is going to happen next. I wonder if his death is going to cause more attacks. I think he probably had a plan that if I die,

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MICHAELA WUESTEWALD

this is what is going to happen. So, even with his death I think that he had something planned that we have to watch out for. I wonder what is next."

Niebrugge agreed, saying she knows bin Laden's death will have a big impact in general, because the focus was on terrorism and Osama bin Laden. Now, as a country, the United States has to worry about who is going to come up as the next threat.

Dumke added, "We know that there is the possibility of retaliation and new leaders coming out because of this. There is a lot of things that could happen. Yemen could become a bigger turmoil mess. All the African and Middle Eastern countries that have weak governments and Taliban or al-Qaida cells in them — anything could really happen."

The students said that, in their government class today, they did a role-play activity where they had to debrief President Obama on how finding bin Laden occurred.

"We talked about how this (war), was completely different because it is a war on terror and not a war on a country," Niebrugge explained. "Bin Laden was an extreme terrorist. They did the exact right thing because they got him. They did the job and got out of there."

"It will be a struggle to determine how this affects our relationships with Pakistan because that is where we found him, and

Afghanistan, too. I think it is going to be a huge focus that it was an American-led Navy SEAL operation. I don't know if that is a good thing or to take it as a bad thing."

One change for the students, between third grade and now, is they comprehend that they are a part of living history.

"When 9/11 happened we were so young. Now we understand it, we can comprehend that his death represents a change," Wuestewald said. "This has kind of gone on for my entire life."

Kindle said his discussions with the students Monday had surprised him, but more than anything made him proud of the students at the school.

"This today is something that our kids will look back and know that they were a part of it when it happened. ... But, no, I didn't expect the reaction from the kids, not just here but across the country," he said.

"For these kids it is a victory and gives a sense of American pride. ... I think it is more about what this stood for, that there was some justice done in the eyes of people and American pride that came out because of this. It was a defining moment for our country and these students whose lives will forever be touched by the events."

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